

A Concept Note on Enhancing Teacher Training and Cooperation among Faculties and Departments of Education in Public and Private Universities in Lebanon

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Abstract

This concept note provides an overview of the teacher education programs in Lebanon as well as a rationale for studying their organizational structures, theoretical orientations, instructional practices, and impact in order to increase cooperation and knowledge transfer among them. The note reviews the extant literature on the subject and proposes a set of initial research questions, following which it describes the process and procedures followed in generating, prioritizing, and implementing a research agenda that focused on the structural make up, conceptual orientations, instructional and evaluation practices, and the degree of focus on citizenship and gender-related issues within the programs under study. Results indicated that most of the programs favor the academic technological orientation, despite some discrepancies in the admissions and transfer requirements, assessment practices, number of required course, and the classification of courses among them. The results also revealed some considerable emphasis on student-centered and interactive teaching. However, the majority of the programs did not have program learning outcomes and did not put much emphasis on citizenship education and gender-related issues.

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I. Introduction

Teacher Education is diverse and complex in present Lebanon due to a number of institutional, affiliation, and curricular considerations. These considerations are grounded in the historical and political development of modern Lebanon, the social fabric of the Lebanese society, and the Lebanese constitution which emphasizes the freedom of education based on adherence to public law and regulations.

Presently, there are several institutions of higher education that operate within Lebanon and offer degree programs in teacher education (See Tables 1 and 2):

Table 1: Lebanese Institutions of Higher Education that Offer Teacher Education Programs

	University	B. A	Masters	PhD	Teaching Diploma	Other
1	Al Kafaat University	√				
2	American University of Beirut	√	√		√	√ ²
3	American University of Science and Technology				√	
4	Global University	√			√	
5	Haigazian University	√	√		√	
6	Lebanese American University	√	√		√	

² Diploma in Special Education

	University	B. A	Masters	PhD	Teaching Diploma	Other
7	Lebanese German University	√				
8	Lebanese International University	√	√		√	
9	Lebanese University	√	√	√		
10	Middle East University	√	√		√	
11	Modern University for Business and Science	√	√		√	
12	Notre Dame University	√	√	√	√	√ ³
13	Saint Joseph University	√	√	√	√	√ ⁴
14	University of Balamand	√	√	√	√	
15	Holy Spirit University of Kaslik	√	√	√	√	√ ² √ ⁵

³ Teaching Certificate in Elementary and Basic Education

⁴ C.A.P.E.S dans toutes les matières au programme du baccalauréat libanais; Diplôme universitaire: Pédagogie universitaire: Démarches pédagogiques innovantes; Diplôme universitaire: Maître de stage; Diplôme universitaire: Encadrement pédagogique

⁵ Diplôme universitaire [DU] en sciences de l'éducation and Formation continue en Sciences de l'éducation

Table 2: B.A Programs Offered at Lebanese Universities

	University	Pre- primary	Elementary	Education	Science and Math Education	Special Education
1	Al Kafaat University	√	√			√
2	American University of Beirut		√			
3	AUST					
4	Global University		√		√	
5	Haigazian University	√	√			
6	Lebanese American University	√	√			
7	Lebanese German University	√	√			
8	Lebanese International University	√				
9	Lebanese University	√	√		√	
10	Middle East University		√	√		
11	Modern University for Business and Science	√	√			
12	Notre Dame University	√			√ ⁸	
13	Saint Joseph University	√	√			
14	University of Balamand		√			
15	Holy Spirit University of Kaslik		√		√	

⁶ Dormant program at the moment

⁷ Dormant program at the moment

⁸ Special Education Diplomas: B.A in Learning Disabilities, B.A in Education of the Gifted

	Teaching Arabic as a Foreign Language	Teaching English as a Foreign Language	English Language and Literature	Leadership and Management	Speech Therapy Education (orthopédagogie)	Guidance and Social Work	Christian Education
							√
	√ ⁶	√ ⁷					
		√	√				
				√		√	
					√		
				√			

Colleges and universities in Lebanon seem to reflect the diverse, vibrant, and competitive nature of the K-12 Lebanese educational system. This nature is grounded in the affiliation of schools with national and international religious groups, independent non-profit, and independent for-profit organizations and manifests itself in the variety of languages taught in schools, the languages of instruction used to teach content areas, and the types of schools patterned after the French, American, Arab, or other hybrid models of education.

II. Statement of the Problem

There is at present a need for cooperation and exchange of accumulated experiences within the teacher education programs in Lebanon. Studies of the structural and conceptual make-up of these programs as well as investigations of their ideological and technological characteristics are important in order create evidence-based dialogue and to improve practice. It is also equally important to study the goals and purposes, course content, curricular orientations, and the pedagogical practices of programs in terms of admission requirements, teaching methods, placement procedures, and modes of apprenticeship in cooperating schools. Specifically, research which addresses various issues relative to the nature, organization, curricular orientations, practices, and the content of teacher education programs and the impact of these programs on student achievement, teachers' sense of general and personal teaching efficacy, motivation for teaching, and other psycho-social variables is needed for a better understanding and enhancement of the role of teacher education in the provision of modern high quality education and in educational reform. It is also important to carry out comparative and evaluation studies of the teacher education programs in Lebanon in light of international standards and exemplary practices in various contexts.

III. Review of Related Literature

Research on the teacher training programs in Lebanon seems to be still in its formative years. The literature review on the subject has identified only two empirical studies that address issues relative to the structural organization and the conceptual foundations of these programs: BouJaoude and Al-Mouhayar (2010), and Freiha (1997). Likewise, there are a few

empirical studies of such programs in the Arab countries (Naqib, 2007; Salame & Wehbe, 2007); and internationally (Levine, 2006). The literature also includes some useful discussion of pertinent issues regarding trends and challenges in the preparation of Arab teachers (Jarrar, 2007) and quality assurance (Ayoubi, 2007; Jarrar & Wehbe, 2007) as well as a few program-specific and subject-specific studies such as science education (BouJaoude, 2006), and teacher personality (Thoumy, 2007).

Using the teacher education analysis frameworks of Kennedy (1990) and Feimen-Nemser (1990), BouJaoude and Al-Mouhayar (2010) conducted a comparative analytic study of teacher education programs in Lebanon in terms of a) program requirements and b) theoretical perspectives on teacher preparation. These researchers concluded that the programs associated with both the private and the public institutions of higher learning actually emphasize the technological and academic orientations in teacher education as described by Feimen-Nemser (1990). That is, teacher education programs in Lebanon tend to focus attention on the provision of the knowledge and skills of teaching as well as the transmission and understanding of content subject matter and related pedagogical content knowledge, PCK. BouJaoude and Al-Mouhayar also noted that there is presently a need to a) prepare specialized teachers for each of the stages of the new educational ladder, especially cycle 3, b) require certification for teaching in private schools, and c) extend the duration of the practicum component of teacher education.

Along similar lines, Freiha (1997) reported the results of a comparative study of the curricula of education programs in Lebanon focusing on the purpose, degree requirements, and the course content within each degree. This researcher concluded that although all of the teacher education programs aim to prepare prospective teachers of various content areas, some programs also prepare counselors, physical education teachers, and program administrators. In addition, Freiha (1997) highlighted some variations among programs both in terms of the number of required credit hours for the BA degree and the content of some degree programs. Finally, he observed that the programs tend to emphasize theory at the expense of practice and that the population of student-teachers in some specializations such as physical education, music, counseling, and special education is not large enough to meet the demand for teachers.

In the Arab countries and the USA, there have been a few studies of teacher education programs that include Salame and Wehbe (2007), Naqib (2007) and Levine (2006). Salame and Wehbe reported findings from a series of descriptive/analytic case studies of teacher education programs in Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Mauritania. These researchers presented some in-depth data about the physical facilities, admission requirements, curricula, teaching methods, and the context of field training. They recommended that coherent national strategies for teacher education be devised and should include referential educational philosophies, curricular reviews, practical training, evaluation systems, and coordination/partnerships with all stakeholders and schools.

Naqib (2007) describes the methodology and some findings of a workshop that was held to release internal and external audit reports of 23 teacher education programs in Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The report highlighted a gap in academic standards between the programs in the Arab countries and those of international programs. Furthermore, it was pointed out that only 6 programs have “good” curricula whereas the remaining 17 programs have “acceptable” curricula. There was also some degree of variation in the quality of the curricula of programs as well as a general lack of using external reference benchmarks. Finally, Naqib (2007) called for conducting objective evaluations of teacher education programs and for using international experiences and standards.

Levine (2006) conducted a five- year longitudinal survey study of education colleges in the United States of America, USA. This researcher reported that three-quarters (3/4) of the programs under study actually have inadequate curricula, low admissions and graduation standards, faculty disconnected from the K-12 schools, and insufficient quality control. In addition, Levine (2007) pointed out that graduating student- teachers from the USA colleges of education do not seem to have developed the requisite skills to a) address the needs of students with learning disabilities or those students from diverse cultural backgrounds, b) maintain order in class, c) integrate technology into their teaching, and d) use student- performance assessment techniques. Consequently, Levine (2006) recommended transforming education schools into professional schools that focus on classroom practice, expanding quality programs, creating incentive

programs to attract the best students to teaching, and making student achievement the primary measure of the success of teacher education programs. Moreover, the report advised all stakeholders in education to make five-year teacher education programs the norm rather than the exception and require every future teacher to complete a traditional arts and sciences baccalaureate degree followed by a master's degree in subject-specific pedagogy.

Finally, it should also be noted that the literature includes some pertinent discussion of the trends and challenges of preparing Arab teachers (Jarrar, 2007) and quality assurance in teacher education (Jarrar & Wehbe, 2007). Likewise, there are a few studies that looked into the efficacy of certain specific programs and interventions in the domains of science education (BouJoade, 2006), special education (Katani, 2007) and teacher personality (Thoumy, 2007).

The preceding review of related literature suggests the need for further in-depth descriptive, comparative, and evaluation studies of a number of issues relative to the program structures/requirements as well as conceptual orientations to teaching within the teacher education programs in Lebanon. It is also equally important to study the efficacy of the programs under investigation in realizing their intended outcomes, their mechanisms of quality assurance, and their performance in light of international standards and exemplary practices in teacher education.

IV. Suggested Initial Study Questions and Theoretical Frameworks

Based on the above review, it was suggested that initial study questions and issues could be formulated and addressed according to a two-dimensional scheme consisting of 1) nature, content, and practices of teacher education programs, and 2) impact of teacher education. Sample questions may include but are not limited to:

- What are the structural and conceptual orientations of the teacher education programs in Lebanon? How do they compare in terms of admission practices, teaching methods, degree requirements, curricula, facilities, measures of quality, evaluation procedures, and material and human resources, etc....

- What is the impact of teacher education programs on student achievement, student-teacher development, and their motivations, beliefs, development of knowledge bases, sense of general teaching and personal teaching efficacy etc.? How do the teacher education programs under study compare to international standards and other state-of-the-art programs in various contexts?
- Other.

It was also proposed that in order to address the above questions, the theoretical frameworks for the analysis of teacher education programs proposed by Kennedy (1990) and Feiman-Nemser (1990) may be useful. Likewise, general as well as subject-specific conceptualizations of teaching knowledge bases in subject areas (English, math, science etc) may be useful as well. According to Kennedy (1990) teacher preparation programs can be classified as either emphasizing development of the knowledge-bases of student-teachers or enhancing their thinking problem-solving skills in order to enable them to analyze new situations and learn from them.

Feiman-Nemser (1990) discusses the structural and conceptual approaches in the study and analysis of teacher education programs. The structural approach focuses on the general organization of the programs under study such as the number of years to complete a program, the number of required credit hours of education and content, the duration of field-based experience, and alternative certification methods. However, this researcher maintains that concentrating on structural matters deprives the investigator from the opportunity to look closely at the program and determining how the time is spent in the program and specifically inside the classroom and during field work. In this respect Feiman-Nemser asserts that "to some extent, the impression of sameness among four-year programs may be an artifact of survey research that focuses on surface features and ignores institutional variation" (Feiman-Nemser, 1990, p. 20).

BouJaoude and Al-Mouhayar explain that conceptual models of evaluation "reflect different insights about teacher preparation and accentuate the importance of orientations derived from the different views of teaching and theories of learning to teach" (BouJaoude & Al-Mouhayar, 2010, p.11). Furthermore these researchers add that the orientations to teacher

education can be academic, practical, technological, personal, and critical/social, with reflective teaching as described (Feiman-Nemser, 1990) and summarized by BouJaoude and Al-Mouhayaras follows:

1. Academic orientation

The academic orientation points out that “teaching is primarily concerned with the transmission of knowledge and the development of understanding” (p. 24). Hence, teachers should not only have a deep understanding of subject matter but also need to have a solid pedagogical content knowledge which includes “useful ways to conceptualize and represent commonly taught topics in a given subject plus an understanding of what makes learning those topics difficult or easy for students of different ages and backgrounds” (Wilson, Shulman, & Rickert, 1986, cited by Feiman-Nemser, 1990, p. 24).

2. Practical orientation

The practical orientation fosters components such as craft, technique and artistry that usually appear during field work. It promotes experience as “a source of knowledge about teaching and a means of learning to teach” (Feiman-Nemser, 1990, p. 26). Novices will learn best through experience, interacting with peers and mentors, and analyzing multiple ways of possible behaviors in specific situations.

3. Technological orientation

The technological orientation highlights the knowledge and skills of teaching in performance. Teaching effectiveness can be taught to novices through “generic teacher behaviors and strategies associated with student achievement gains” (Feiman-Nemser, 1990, p. 29). Principles of effective practice are strengthened in this orientation.

4. Personal orientation

The personal orientation emphasizes that a teacher should be a learner, seek development, and use oneself efficiently: “The teacher’s own personal development is a central part of teacher preparation” (Feiman-Nemser, 1990, p. 32). Primacy is given to field experiences where novices can acquire what they need to know and later try by themselves to bypass professional difficulties. Educators, according to this orientation, play the role of facilitators creating situations for prospective teachers to investigate problems and various events.

5. Critical/Social Orientation

The critical orientation reveals the teachers' mission towards helping in building democratic society. The teacher, beside the role of an educator, plays the role of a political activist. According to Feiman-Nemser (1990), the teacher promotes democratic values and practices attempts in a learning community through group problem solving. Moreover, the teacher participates in curriculum development and policymaking and works to improve schools through community involvement and political activity. Focus in this orientation is in helping novices develop their identity and to associate their experience in the society with the school. (BouJoarde & El-Mouhayar, 2010, pp. 317-318).

In addition to the above models for the analysis of teacher education programs, it may be useful to analyze programs in terms of some contemporary conceptualizations of the knowledge bases of teaching as well as standards for professional practice (Shulman, 1987, National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education guidelines. Shulman's (1987) theoretical framework of teaching knowledge is comprised of various categories of knowledge including content knowledge, general pedagogical knowledge, curriculum knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge, knowledge of learners and their characteristics, knowledge of educational contexts, and knowledge of educational ends, purposes, and values. These types of knowledge provided a theoretical approach to the development of a teacher education knowledge base that was complemented by a policy and practice perspective which manifested itself in the form of professional standards, teaching procedures, and assessment techniques to ensure excellence in teaching. Of particular relevance to the development of a teaching knowledge base from the policy and practice perspective were the initiatives of the NBPTS standards which maintain that teachers need to a) demonstrate commitment to students and their learning, b) know their subjects, c) manage and monitor learning, d) reflect on their practice, and e) be members of a learning community. Similarly, the NCATE requirements for accreditation stipulate that higher education institutions have a specialized knowledge base of their teacher education programs that correspond to their mission statement. Along similar lines, attempts to create national standards for curriculum, instruction, and assessment have also contributed to the enhancement of the processes of teacher

preparation as well as classroom practices, thereby corroborated efforts to develop a teaching knowledge base (See Ayoubi, 2007; Jarrar, 2007; Jarrar & Wehbe, 2007).

V. Research Agenda and Action Plan

The organizing committee of the seminar met with the deans and chairpersons of the various colleges and departments that offer teacher education programs in order to devise a research agenda and action plan that specify the focus of the research seminar as well as identify potential contributors. Consequently, it was agreed that the lines of inquiry of the seminar be focused on the structural make up and conceptual orientations of the BA programs in education with some focus on the admissions, teaching methods, and evaluation practice. It was also agreed that the topics of citizenship education and gender manifestations in the policies and practices of the programs under study be also addressed.

VI. Overview of Study Authors, Topics, Methodology/ Findings, and Recommendations

The table below presents an overview of the authors, corresponding topics, methodology and findings of the various papers:

Author	Topic	Methodology	Findings
Boujoude, S. & El Mouhayar, R.	Trends and Issues in Teacher Education Programs	Theoretically-based comparative analysis of the orientations of programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic and technological orientations dominate the teacher education programs in Lebanon based on varied documents and interviews. There is also attention to some aspects of other orientations i.e., constructivism, reflective practice, critical thinking, and inquiry Unlike other universities, the Lebanese university offers two types of BA degrees: 1) Grade 1-3 and Grade 4-6. Lack of 7-9 preparation programs

Khorasenjian, M.	Admission Requirements	Comparative analysis of admission, transfer, and graduation requirements by 12 universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission requirements include secondary school certificate and language proficiency • Agreement on the program duration: 3 years • Francophone systems differ from Anglophone with regard to language requirements • Transfer requirements vary: No limit on the number of credits, maximum 30 credits, score of 70%, C, or 2.0, interview • No measures of professional readiness to enter profession
Zakaria, N.	General/Core Preparation Courses in Lebanese Universities	Content analysis/review of programs and course descriptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebanese University offers 10 specialization tracks • Same content, but different course titles • Good number of practicum courses, but some universities classified as general, not specialization course • Same content in general/ specialization course
Samra, S.	General University Requirements	Cross tabulation and comparison of GUR courses by universities in Lebanon, USA, and Australia.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American-style universities emphasize GUR courses. • GUR courses are classified into languages, humanities, social sciences, quantitative thought, etc.
Abou-Rejeili, S.	Core Education Requirements	A comparative analysis of core education courses by participating programs and distribution of courses by the domains of knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrepancies by Francophone and Anglophone universities: Francophone more emphasis on specialized core courses

Rawadi, N.	Core Education Requirements	Comparative cross-tabulation of core courses by universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrepancies in courses considered core educ. requirements • Inconsistencies in the number of credit hours in the core component
Chataoui, M.	Practicum Component	Analysis of organizational structure of practicum component in 12 universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrepancies in the number of courses, credit hours, actual training, and visits by supervisors
Osta, I	Teaching Methods	Document analysis of course syllabi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on student-centered, active/interactive approaches: inquiry, discussion, project, research, etc. • Classified use of teaching methods by 14 universities • Overall frequency of teaching methods • Frequency distribution of methods by 14 Universities
Shatila, A.	Assessment Practices	Review of international trends of assessment. Assessment theoretical framework, analysis of syllabi and questionnaire. Cross tabulation of assessment practices by framework dimensions and universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of PLO's in most programs and discrepancies in assessment practices

Abd El Kader, G.	Citizenship Education	Review of "best practice" in citizenship education. Dichotomous yes/no questionnaire and classification rank-order of universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrepancies among programs with regard to emphasis on the various components of citizenship education
Safiyiddeen, S.	Gender in Teacher Education Programs	Theoretically-based analysis of policies, mission and vision, and courses of participating programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No attention to gender issues in teacher education programs under study

VII. Discussion and Conclusion

The papers presented in this seminar provide a comprehensive coverage of the structural make-up of the teacher education programs of participating universities and programs. There is also attention to the conceptual orientations of these programs as well as analysis of their teaching and evaluation practices as well as degrees of focus on citizenship and gender-related issues.

The empirical evidence provided in the various papers establishes the groundwork for an informed and evidence-based discussion of the admissions, transfer and graduation requirements, general university requirements as well as the core course and specialization requirements of the various programs under study. The teaching and assessment practices within the programs are also considered and the extent to which the programs attend to practicum, citizenship education, and gender-related issues are also addressed.

Although the findings of the various papers address some important aspects of the structural make-up and practices of the programs, many of these findings should be interpreted with caution. Because of limited time and other impeding considerations that are acknowledged by the authors, triangulation of data sources was not always possible. This may have affected the validity and reliability of some findings in a very major way. This is particularly the case with findings regarding the teaching methods and assessment practices of the programs, the degree of their emphasis on citizenship education and gender-related issues, or the quality of the practicum experiences provided to student-teachers. Investigating these issues requires field observations of classes, interviews with stakeholders, and other qualitative and quantitative data sources in order to arrive at a thick description of the various components of the programs under study.

It should also be noted that the papers presented in this seminar have focused only on the structural and conceptual make-up of the BA teacher education programs. As such, the findings are not generalizable to the teaching Diploma (TD), MA, or PhD programs. Furthermore, it should be noted that studying the profile of student-teachers and teacher-educators, student achievement, program effectiveness, as well as the psycho-social characteristics of various stakeholders were beyond the scope of the present seminar.

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